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Frank S. Saurman

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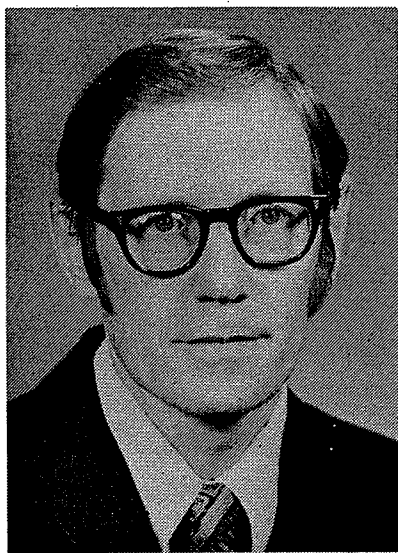
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MINORITY STUDENTS: ARE WE GIVING THEM ADEQUATE SUPPORT?

Frank S. Saurman

INTRODUCTION

Four, six or even twelve years of academic deprivation surely cannot be surmounted with one year of a college or university remedial, tutorial, bridging, or other active support program for the disadvantaged, or as some of my colleagues would rather say — minority/poverty students. However, it should be stressed that this country is faced with this dilemma and like it or not, we cannot turn our collective backs on the student, who, because of his background and environmental deficiencies, wants a higher education and does need some supportive measures to help him through his first tenuous years in college.



Frank Saurman is currently Assistant Director of Financial Aid at Purdue University with special responsibility for minority group programs. He has authored several articles on financial aid counseling and is co-editor of the 1971-73 edition of the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association College and University handbook.

In this presentation I hope to present some methods and alternatives being used currently to cope with these problems. It is realized that many educators and administrators have their own feelings about the solution of the disadvantaged student problem and what to do with this student after he arrives on the campus. Some of the difficulties that may arise or may have already been encountered because of their socio-economic backgrounds will also be examined. We need to be aware of the differences in the cultural backgrounds of these students. Everyone has heard of the black student who states that since the cultures of blacks and whites are so radically different, we should treat him differently in our analysis of his financial need and in the treatment of his college budget. I am not necessarily advocating a drastic change in our need analysis system, for I strongly feel that most colleges and most aid officers utilize the utmost flexibility when dealing with a disadvantaged student's application and budget, but I do feel that we should be aware of these divergencies. Perhaps the negative income concept presently developed by the College Scholarship Service (CSS) is one of the answers to the treatment of need for a low income student. Or perhaps a unique departure from the established system is the answer.

It has been postulated by several people that a new approach to the analysis of the Parents' Confidential Statement (PCS) be used when reviewing the case of a minority student.

At the present time, the net income for computer analysis is the estimated 1972 income of the family. It is felt in many circles that this is unfair to the minority family because it does not reflect the fact that they may finally have arrived at that income level after many, many frugal years of struggling to sustain themselves to meet the basic needs of life. During these extremely lean years, many debts have most likely occurred in order to eke out a meager existence. By the time the income finally starts to improve, the family is faced with the support of their children's education at the parental assistance level equivalent to that of a middle class family whose income, although not large, may have been relatively stable for a longer period of time.

The proposal here is that we take the income for the last three years, based on the PCS, and strike an average, which will, in a more equitable manner, make some allowance for any incurred debts, etc., that may have occurred during the minority family's lean years. By treating the income in this manner, we will be expecting a more realistic parental contribution towards the student's education as well as giving the family an opportunity to improve their standard of living.

For the most part, the majority of the minority/poverty students on our campuses are comprised of blacks and chicanos. Therefore, an historical preface is needed at this point to place our future remarks in their proper perspective. I allude here to the problem besetting black students, but we can most assuredly classify these types of problems with those of all low income minority students. The culture of the black student and the black community in our society today is very different from the white middle class value structure

of our white society. The black community does not regard higher education as taking top priority on their income. Indigenous to the black culture is the fact that the father and mother often use their money separately within the same household, and often, the parents so mismanage their funds that, although on paper it would look like they should support their children to some extent with finances for their education, they either are not able to do so or they refuse to do so. Also, many students come from homes that are so deprived that, for the student to go to college, robs the home of a potential wage earner who could be contributing to the family coffers. This, then, causes an added reluctance on the part of the parents to allow their children to even attend a college or university. If they are allowed to attend college they are often required to send money home to help support the remainder of the family or to contribute their summer earnings and earnings made during the break away from their studies towards the upkeep of the family household. All of this has a direct bearing upon financial aid to these students because of the nature of the expected parental contribution from CSS or American College Testing (ACT) Program's needs analysis system. Because of economic conditions, minority students often cannot earn enough money from summer earnings as required by the college, creating a shortage to himself and causing a severe problem in the construction of his financial aid package.

Coupled with the lack of summer earnings is the fact that many black students prefer to live in either apartments or private housing rather than in University housing. From past information and experience, it has been found that the majority of black students *need* a budget of between \$300-\$400 more than the average white student. The reasons for these are varied:

1. Many black students are being charged exorbitant rental prices for residing in the various apartments and rooming houses near the campus.
2. Black students who never really enjoyed the material things in life before coming to college tend to live over their heads when they move into the academic community.
3. They attempt to rationalize all the wrong doing that has befallen their race by loading themselves down with an abundance of clothing, living in apartments or other areas that are above their means as a student, and acquiring a car which, for many, is the first real materialism they have ever experienced.

All of these things add to a compilation of problems which often results in the student returning to the financial aid office immediately after the start of the school year and requesting additional financial aid funds. It is very difficult for the aid officer to justify an increase in aid when the student "should have been able to manage his funds appropriately". But the plain fact is that this student, because of his environment, culture, or whatever, just does not manage his funds properly and as a result, comes up short at the beginning of the academic year. The conclusion made here is that the budgets that are set up for white students are many times unrealistic within the black culture.

OTHER AREAS OF CONCERN

Additional major areas of concern of which we should be aware are:

1. Most of the students from the ghetto who are considered truly disadvantaged come to the campus without any money. This is in direct contradiction to the white person who would not leave home if he did not have enough money to go to college. As a result of their arrival without any funds, naturally they look to the financial aid officer immediately for assistance.

a. Since the student does not have any money and must have his books before he starts classes, he must therefore have a letter of credit or someone to vouch for him to the local bookstore manager(s) in order to get a full set of books, unless of course, the college has direct control over all books sold.

b. He does not have money for the bare necessities such as toothpaste, shaving cream, etc. I have known of many cases where the student arrived in my office without any clothes except the ones on his back.

2. If the student is from an extremely disadvantaged area or if he is a ward of the court, he usually has no place that he calls home. Therefore, the University is his home! Because of this fact, he has no place to go during school vacations and during the summer. As a result, many students of this type stay on campus where they will be close to the only place they know as a home and also a place where someone will give them employment or take an interest in them. This, of course, complicates matters as the university does not normally keep the residence halls open during holidays. During the summer the student usually lives in an apartment, and, although he works within the community, he spends all of his summer earnings on living expenses thereby not having any money to contribute towards his next school year's obligations.

3. Students who come to a state-supported university from out-of-state have great difficulty meeting expenses with the financial aid resources available because of high college costs and the limitations placed on university and federal funds. This creates a tremendous strain on them both psychologically, emotionally and most of all, *academically*. If students are worrying constantly about their finances, it is only normal that they will not do as well academically.

A minority/poverty student often experiences difficulty during the first three or four semesters of academic work. It is fairly normal for him to be on probation for one or two consecutive semesters. It is ludicrous to recruit this student, bring him to college and then send him back to the ghetto as soon as he falls below a certain average or index.

The student needs continuous encouragement and reinforcement. It may be necessary to *keep him on aid until he is either dropped from the university or leaves of his own accord*.

To further emphasize this point, it is incongruous to bring these students to the campus unless there is a cognizance on the part of the faculty and staff that they will be guaranteed remedial, tutorial and many other forms of counseling assistance and/or other supportive programs.

Counselors cannot take a passive role; they must be active. Counselors in this sense include academic, residence hall, student personnel deans and financial aid. More than the normal attention must be assured. We cannot wait

until the students approach us for counseling assistance; we must go to them and look after them personally. Not only counselors but instructors as well must become more acutely aware that problems exist and that they must extend themselves beyond their normal duty in order to enhance the learning situation. Housing must become a halfway house. Provisions must be made for housing, counselors, and jobs the year around.

It is important to understand the minority/poverty problem and the total involvement and commitment of faculty and staff should these students be brought to the campus. It is the duty of society to enhance and improve the educational facilities for the "disadvantaged" students in our country, and most of all, to give them opportunity. It is totally unrealistic, however, to do so unless proper planning and total commitment is made.

SOME EXISTING PROGRAMS

At Purdue several steps have been taken towards providing programs, that, although not the complete answer to solving all of the problems and predicaments faced in the recruitment of the minority/poverty student, are certainly a leap in the right direction. They seek to move towards what is hoped will be awareness of self, increased motivation, desire to excel and compete, and overall greater retention and completion of a degree program.

To quote from Harland W. White, Director of Admissions, "It should be clear to all of us that if these students must be 'spoon fed' through the front door of the University, this 'spoon feeding' cannot suddenly stop the day classes begin. These young people have the potential and minimal academic preparation to be successful. But, they do not have the confidence, the study skills, the practice in scheduling their time, or indeed even in the awareness of time and schedule that most freshmen have. And the academic preparation is likely to be minimal. Therefore, if many of these new students are to succeed, not only school counselors but a large number of faculty members will have to assist by 'spoon feeding' for at least a semester or two. This does not mean a thirty-minute conference every three or four weeks. For some it may mean almost daily contact for awhile. It may mean academic tutoring, personal counseling, an evening or a weekend in a faculty home, or for some it may mean all of these. Unless the faculty is willing to give this kind of personal help to these youngsters, we have no right, indeed it is almost criminal to recruit them. And, it should be remembered that many of these students will resist this help even though they may need it badly."

A program was inaugurated in the School of Humanities, Social Science and Education during the fall of 1970 for these culturally, educationally, and financially disadvantaged freshman students to enable them to move into an academic position comparable to that of the average freshman. To cut down on the high rate of academic failure for these high risk students, it was felt that some special first year experiences were necessary.

A selection of students was made from those black freshmen with a verbal SAT score of 400 or less and from a verbal SAT score of 350 or under for white freshmen.

These students were then assigned to three special courses designed as an integral part of the first year curriculum. The curriculum consisted of the following:

English	100	—	3 hours
GS	150	—	3 hours
GS	101A	—	3 hours
Biology	103A	—	3 hours
Sociology	100	—	3 hours
Reading	185	—	1 hour

16 hours

The English 100 course was designed for freshmen whose test scores indicated a need for directed practice in the patterns of English prose and a review of fundamentals in English as applied in writing with emphasis on the organization of expository paragraphs and the expository theme.

The Perspective course (GS 101A) starts with a critical approach to the question of the nature and the role of the modern university. It asks, what are the responsibilities of the university to the student, to the teacher, to the society which supports the institution, to a set of ideals. What are the responsibilities of the teacher? What are the responsibilities of the student? What is he doing in college? What does it mean to be a learner, to become educated? To quote Dean L. E. Tractman of the School of Humanities, Social Science and Education, "Clearly, these are critical questions for all freshmen, but they are particularly important for the disadvantaged student coming from a minority group." A great variety of issues, both historic and contemporary are felt to be pertinent and significant to further clarification and discussion in an unstructured setting.

The Personal Development and Growth Course (GS 150) is divided into three parts:

1. Human Relations (Sensitivity and Self-Awareness)
2. Developmental Study and Planning Techniques
3. Personal Finance and Money Management

One segment of this course is basically a human relations program delving into sensitivity and self-awareness. Since many of these students come from almost exclusively black environments or inner city complexes, they arrive on the campus with a profound feeling of alienation and loneliness. According to Dr. H. Allan Dye of the Department of Education, the attempt here is to develop an increased understanding of one's own self and his behavior, to cope with the "identity crisis", to improve each person's awareness of themselves in relationship with one another. The emotional and cognitive processes are examined through laboratory methods of one's own perception of himself. Basically the emphasis is on human relations and a basic sensitivity, appreciation and understanding of people of all races, classifications and life styles through a tolerance and acceptance of other people's differences.

Another segment and one which pertains most seriously to many disadvantaged students from inner city schools is the lack of well developed study skills. Techniques of preparation for academic exercises, planning of study chores, psychology of learning and of forgetting, the art of listening, improving concentration and motivation for maximum performance in college are just a few of the topics covered in this section.

The third segment of this course and a problem faced by many of the students, especially those from financially impoverished backgrounds, is how to handle personal finances and money management. The concern is for the student, who for the first time in his life is granted large sums of financial assistance and who must know how to manage these funds and to see that his funds are budgeted properly over the entire semester or in some cases the academic year. The attempt is also made to dispel the lack of understanding of financial aid terminology and philosophy, explain the obligation of loan repayments, the many federal and state aid programs available as well as a more thorough understanding of interest payments, pricing, discounts, avoiding debts, and general awareness of consumer pitfalls.

The students also take a course in biology and fill out their 15 credit-hour semester with either psychology, sociology, math, political science or other comparable introductory course. It should also be mentioned that in-depth counseling and tutoring assistance is provided this group throughout their first year. Naturally, there are many, many other ways to assist this type of student to make the adjustment necessary in his first college year and to help him to succeed academically. Other more feasible or perhaps more tenable programs may be adopted to fit the particular situation or budgetary restrictions of a given institution.

Extremely important in the development of any supportive program for minority/poverty students is the inclusion of a comprehensive reading program. According to Mrs. Helen Bass Williams, Assistant Professor, Counselor, and initiator of many supportive program innovations at Purdue, "the deprivation of the minority student's reading level affects the totality of his university learning. We must create a horizontal paradigm because these students cannot read simple language when they arrive on the campus." Mrs. Williams feels that diagnostic tests are of prime importance and must be given to all minority students at the very beginning of the first semester to indicate the student's ability to learn. Basically all students whose verbal score falls at 400 or below need special reading support.

Before he can think — do basic math or scientific problems — he must be able to learn how to follow directions and instructions, make interpretations and to analyze through visual assimilation, and to understand the written word through reading comprehension.

Starting at the level of the student at the precise place where he needs this aid, using materials that must be assessed and adjusted to the interest of the student, will be the only way a sound reading program can help solve his deficiency.

A program that has been fairly successful in the Purdue School of Industrial Management over the past four years has been the Business Opportunity Program (BOP). Its mission is to bring selected students to the campus who are disadvantaged in two ways. They are financially unable to go to college without assistance and very marginal on an academic basis, usually by reason of their poor environment, lack of motivation, too much work while in high school in order to help at home with family needs and the like. The BOP's key and distinguishing aspect is the provision of intensive personal support to each of its students, especially during the freshman year. The Extra Care Program, as it is called, is made up of the following five elements: 1, summer program; 2, special counselors; 3, faculty advisors (fathers-in-residence); 4, tutoring; and 5, summer jobs.

These students are brought to the campus immediately after graduation from high school and given an eight-week remedial or bridging session. During the eight weeks, they take refresher mathematics as well as a course in communication skills (an inter-disciplinary English-Speech course); also, they take an Introduction to Industrial Management and a regular freshman university course, such as history, psychology, etc.

The summer session is paid for by contributions from various industries who are not only interested in helping these students but who wish to help employ them in their companies during the succeeding summer breaks. There are no strings attached to the students by these firms but if the student, after graduation, wishes to gain employment by one of the firms, he has the opportunity, provided he meets all of their requirements and is acceptable to them.

Classes are held 5 1-2 days per week and the students are housed and fed in one of the residence halls. Books are furnished, and the students are given \$10.00 per week spending money. They are tested when they begin the eight-week session and again at its conclusion to determine their improvement.

The students return to the campus for the normal fall classes with financial assistance being provided by the University according to their need. Special academic and social counselors are provided during the intense summer session as well as during the academic year to give them guidance and direction. Tutorial assistance is given to any student who runs into academic difficulties during the year.

Like most programs of its kind, there have been successes and failures. But primarily, the concept is good. What is needed in all of these types of programs is a total commitment and involvement not by one or two, or a group of individuals, but by the entire faculty and staff of each college and university. Without total commitment, both in time, effort and financial backing, there is no way in which the opportunity, which is the American way of life, can be provided towards the education of those persons in our society from minority backgrounds who need it, want it, but cannot now attain it, because of lack of finances, encouragement, insistence, or deprivation in academic training.

CONCLUSION

With the philosophy and decision on the part of the present Office of Education administration to allocate and channel Work/Study and Educational Opportunity Grant funds to institutions for awards directly to the neediest of low-income students, it would seem an empty gesture to respond to the admission and granting of aid to these students but be unresponsive to their needs after they arrive on the campus.

It is, therefore, inherently apparent that we must not only understand the problems that confront us, but devise methods to cope with them by using our collective minds and energies towards the betterment of our society.